SOLIDARITY AND DRUG USE

IN THE ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC SCENE

by:

Philip R. Kavanaugh

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between drug use and solidarity in the electronic dance music (EDM) scene. The U.S. literature on raves and the current EDM scene has levied a serious blow to cultural studies and social movement scholars' claims that raves were a significant youth cultural movement of the 1980s and 1990s. The primary challenge in reconciling this debate centers on the concept of *solidarity* and whether raves and its participants created and experienced a naturally occurring form, or simply one induced by illegal drugs. In this study, raves and the current EDM scene are used as a microcosm to understand classic and contemporary ideas about solidarity and the cultural significance of drugs in youth culture. I also consider complications to the seemingly straightforward connection between drugs and solidarity, including how that connection may have been altered by rave's cultural fragmentation. The data for this study were drawn from a multi-method ethnography examining forces of cultural change in the rave scene (Anderson 2005). A secondary analysis of this ethnography was conducted to examine the relationship between solidarity and drug use. Findings indicate that the relationship between drug use and solidarity is substantially more complicated than previous theoretical and empirical work on the rave scene has conceptualized.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Raves and electronic dance music (i.e. techno, house, trance, and drum and bass parties), have existed in North American and European nations since the mid 1980s, and the subsequent emergence of rave culture is now evident in all of the major industrialized nations of the world (Bennett 2001; Measham, Aldridge, and Parker. 2001). Despite this ubiquity, the electronic dance music (EDM) scene is an understudied social phenomenon that has been primarily addressed from two conflicting academic perspectives. One view espouses an ideology of peace, love, unity, and respect (PLUR)[1], rooted in a sense of community and empathy for others (Hill 2002; Hutson 1999, 2000). An alternative view espouses a cultural ethos of alienated youth consuming illegal substances and posits that the PLUR ideology is synthetically induced, resulting merely from the drug use commonly associated with EDM events and culture (Hammersley, Ditton, and Smith 1999; Morel 1999; Reynolds 1998).

The key challenge in reconciling this divergent body of scholarship centers on the concept of *solidarity,* and whether raves and their participants created and experienced a naturally occurring form, or simply one induced by illegal drugs. The primary aim of this thesis is to investigate these competing claims about solidarity and drugs in the both the past rave era and the contemporary EDM scene. Moreover, has the relationship between

solidarity and drug use in this scene changed over time? If so, how? As there are likely many influences on solidarity at any given point in time, this thesis will also consider other factors potentially complicating the seemingly straightforward connection between drugs and solidarity, including how that connection may have been altered by rave's cultural fragmentation (Anderson 2005).

Solidarity: Competing Claims

International scholarship in the subfield of cultural studies suggests that the portrayal of the EDM scene as characterized by widespread drug abuse is misguided. These cultural studies theorists have noted how the youth culture of the EDM scene fosters an intense feeling of camaraderie and sense of belonging for its participants (McRobbie 1994; Tomlinson 1998). This body of work suggests that the connectedness and sense of belonging that the EDM scene promotes functions in large part as a release and therapy for contemporary youth who are often alienated from conventional modern society (Hill 2002; Tomlinson 1998).

Thornton (1995) applied Bordieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital to illustrate that EDM's collective members employ various resources such as clothing style, as *subcultural capital*, which functions as a means of expressing their authentic status in the scene. In this work, the EDM scene is theorized as a site where youth construct identities defined in opposition to mainstream and popular culture. Similar work argues that EDM culture functions as means for renegotiating and exploring gender roles (Pini 1997), as well as personal and social identity construction (McRobbie 1994).

Contemporary anthropological work has also found that ravers experience an intense sense of connectedness and spirituality and that this experience is the result of a number of interrelated factors, not simply drug use (Hutson 1999, 2000; Takahashi and Olaveson 2003). Research addressing the psychological and psychosocial effects of ritual stimulation at dance events suggests that the emotional, physiological and physiological states of a collective group may be "synchronized" when group members are all exposed to the same "driving stimuli," and that a sense of community can indeed result from this synchronization. This state of exhilaration is then theorized as reinforcing group cohesion at EDM events (Wedenoja 1990).

Other literature on raves and the current EDM scene has levied a serious blow to cultural studies, anthropology, and social movement scholars' claims that raves were a significant youth movement of the 1980s and 1990s. Here, it is argued that the drug MDMA (commonly known as *Ecstasy*) is responsible for amplifying the social bonding associated with rave culture (Melechi 1993; Reynolds 1998). This work notes that MDMA functions to increase the brain's production of dopamine and serotonin - the chemicals responsible for feelings of euphoria and well-being. Reynolds (1998) asserts that, "rave music has gradually evolved into a self-conscious science of intensifying MDMA's sensation" (85). In effect, the social bonding experienced is primarily a function of the drugs being taken. Similar research suggests that the one's appreciation of electronic dance music is heightened through the use of MDMA, almost to the extent of inducing a form of trance (Malbon 1999). Although such work concedes that clubbers do attain a kind of spirituality at dance events, MDMA is cited as the source.

Research conducted in the area of substance abuse prevention / medical science has addressed rave culture primarily from the standpoint of elucidating its connection to drug use and the attendant consequences of such use. This research has found that MDMA use is associated with psychological side effects such as anxiety, paranoia, depression, and sleep problems, and physiological side effects such as nausea, teeth clenching and muscle tension. The effects of long-term Ecstasy use are not yet known, but are thought to be similar to other amphetamines such as cocaine and include both memory loss and serious depression (Bolla, McCann, and Ricuarte 1998). There is also evidence that chronic MDMA use can cause permanent brain damage (Measham, Aldridge, and Parker. 2001). While there are concerns that those who take club drugs are more vulnerable to sexual assault, the empirical evidence of club drug effects on sexual activity is mixed: rave culture discourages sexual aggressiveness, and while some drugs do lower sexual inhibitions, they also can inhibit sexual performance (Mesham, Aldridge, and Parker. 2001).

Other research has focused mainly on the demographic patterns of club drug use (Forsyth, Bernard, and McKeganey 1997 ; Mesham, Aldridge, and Parker 2001; Pedersen and Skrondal 1999; Shewan, Dalgarno, and Reith. 2000). This work has noted that although ravers do come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, most are white. Also, slightly more males than females attend raves. Further, most of those who attend raves are employed. To the extent that rave attendance and rave-related drug use creates life-management problems, research has found that such problems tend to be worse for

younger users and females, and for those who use combinations or excessive quantities of drugs (Topp et al. 1999).

While not as empirically grounded as the research in the medical and health science fields, the postmodernist critique of rave as an escape from the social order is equally damaging. Neoconservative postmodernist scholars have portrayed rave as a form of temporary escape from social reality that is devoid of meaning or substance (Melechi 1993; Rietveld 1993). Agreeing with Baudrillard's thesis of the postmodern world as simulacra, Reynolds (1998) succinctly articulates the postmodernist critique, noting that EDM culture is "geared toward fascination rather than meaning, sensation rather than sensibility; creating an appetite for impossible states of hyperstimulation ... the celebration of celebration, a love of nothing" (Reynolds 1998:86-90).[2]

It is my primary aim to reconcile these competing claims about solidarity and drug use in rave culture. In this thesis, raves and the current EDM scene are used as a microcosm to understand both classic and contemporary ideas about solidarity as well as the cultural significance of drugs in youth culture. I draw on classical work by Durkheim and Tonnies to guide the analysis. I begin by providing a brief overview of the classic theories of solidarity. This is followed by a discussion of more recent work in the area of solidarity and collective identity, focusing mainly on work conducted in area of popular culture. I then discuss solidarity in the current EDM scene, how the scene has largely made a venue-shift to commercial night clubs, and the further implications that commercialization has had on solidarity. Here I focus primarily on work by Anderson (2005), in order to provide a historical context. Next I present my findings, concentrating

on the relationship between solidarity and drug use, and how the change of the EDM scene has impacted this relationship.

By addressing the drug use and solidarity debate in this way, this work will advance the social problems / drugs literature on rave culture by further unpacking the extent to which drugs facilitate solidarity and group cohesion in the EDM scene, accounting for 1) other influences, and 2) how this relationship may have changed over time. Theoretically, this work has the potential to expand the classic concept of solidarity by accounting for peripheral cultural forms. Classical theory by Durkheim and Toinnes are drawn on to provide a theoretical template. This work will advance these classic theories by 1) examining solidarity in the context of fluid, peripheral collective bodies (here, the EDM scene), and 2) articulating how external factors, such as drug use, may impact the way in which solidarity occurs.

Notes

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1. A native term of the EDM community, PLUR is an acronym that stands for Peace, Love, Unity and Respect. Use of the term is well documented in previous literature on the EDM scene, as well as in the data used in this paper.

2. For an excellent critique of the neoconservative postmodernist take on the significance of rave culture, see Hutson (1999).

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Classic Solidarity

The classical theories of gemeinschaft / gesellschaft and mechanical / organic solidarity have important similarities and differences. Tonnies (1957) used the term *gemeinschaft* (roughly translated as 'community') to refer to a type of society characterized by close ties, kinship, and tradition. This term refers primarily to rural villages and primary groups. The term *gesellschaft* (roughly translated as 'association') refers to the kind of relations that occur in the modern industrialized societies. In modern societies, people come together based only on instrumental self-interest. In gesellschaft societies, individuals display no sense of community or collective identity, and interact primarily as a means of advancing their individual goals. Industrialization is theorized as the force responsible for replacing the lasting personal and social relations that characterized gemeinschaft societies with comparatively impersonal and terse forms of interaction.

Later theoretical work supported these classic views on the nature of solidarity in society, and similarly noted that member integration is a key component of group cohesion (Durkheim 1933, 1995). Here it is theorized that the key element of integration is the extent of member interaction. Participation in rituals is what draws members of groups into common activities that will then bind them together. How frequently one

interacts or partakes in a given ritual is a measure of value integration. That is, the more one participates, the greater one displays the sharing of values and beliefs with other group members. The stronger the ideology of a group, the more unified that group will be.

The difference between value consensus and integration is formally approximated in Durkheim's (1933) notion of *mechanical* and *organic solidarity*. Simply, mechanical solidarity describes a collective that is characterized by likeness and similarity, often resulting from shared moral sentiments. This form of solidarity was characteristic of agrarian and communal societies and mirrors the notion of gemeinschaft. Conversely, o*rganic solidarity* develops out of differences, rather than likenesses, between individuals (Durkheim 1933). Organic solidarity results from urbanization and specialization in modern western society, and with differentiation of functions in society arise differences between societal members. These differences result in a sense of solidarity established through interdependence created by the specialization of labor rather than through shared beliefs.

On one hand, urbanization and modernity are theorized as contributing to the elimination of solidarity (Tonnies 1957). Conversely, the concept of organic solidarity argues that the nature of solidarity has not disappeared; it simply must be redefined. Because individuals now engage in differentiated ways of life and specialized activities, societal members become dependent upon one another and networks of solidarity can now develop between them (Durkheim 1933). In this case, solidarity is still present, although it takes a different form. However, other work has noted that even those social

systems with a highly developed organic solidarity still needed a common conscience collective or they will deteriorate into hostility and antagonism (Durkheim 1933).

A discussion of classical work on solidarity would be incomplete without mentioning work on religious rituals and celebrations (Durkheim 1995). This work views religion as inherently social, and as such, functioning as a source of solidarity and identification for the individuals within a society. This is especially evident with regard to mechanical solidarity systems, as empirical work among aboriginal tribes has revealed. It also occurs, although to a lesser extent, in the context of organic solidarity. In this view, religion is a functional source of social cohesion. Religion acts to pull people together, both cognitively and physically, in the form of religious services. By doing so, religion is able to reaffirm collective morals and beliefs in all members of society (Durkheim 1995).

Contemporary Solidarity

Recent theoretical work in the subfield of the cultural sociology fuses Durkheimian notions of solidarity and Goffman dramaturgy with a purposive, rational-instrumental view of collective behavior (Alexander 2004). Critics have suggested that while this work has afforded Durkheim a more prominent place within the subfield of cultural sociology, it pays little attention to the relationship between the rational public sphere and the spheres of entertainment and popular culture (Thompson 2004). As a result, the applicability of Durkhiem's theory of solidarity and the collective conscious has been limited in these areas of inquiry.

Other sociological work that has addressed notions of solidarity in spheres of culture has done so under the rubric of *collective identity*. The roots of the concept can be

traced to the classic work of Durkheim and even Marx, as well as more recently to the mid- century work of Erickson (1968) and Goffman (1963). Although there is no clearly articulated definition, the conceptual essence of collective identity involves a shared and interactive sense of "we-ness", and a corresponding sense of *collective agency,* or purposive action on behalf of the collective (Snow 2001). Although the concept can be distinguished from personal and social identities, collective identities depend largely on the individual's acceptance of that identity as highly important to one's sense of self (Gamson 1991). Collective identity also shares similarities with Durkheim's concept of mechanical solidarity and Tonnies's gemeinschaft.

However, despite such parallels, scholars addressing culture in the collective identity literature have not applied their work toward advancing classic work on solidarity. Most scholarly work conducted in the subfield of collective identity has addressed the politicization and resource mobilization of various social groups in the context of an organized social movement, and how these variables then impact group identity consciousness (Gamson 1991, 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Further, as with Alexander's (2004) work, most scholarship in this area neglects to examine collective identity within the realm of popular culture. Only Sarabia and Schriver's (2004) and Haenfler's (2004) respective work on skinhead and strait edge youth subcultures have attempted to illustrate the diffuse, multidimensional nature of identity in fluid social collectives. Regrettably however, neither of these works links its respective theoretical insights to classical work on solidarity.

EDM and Solidarity

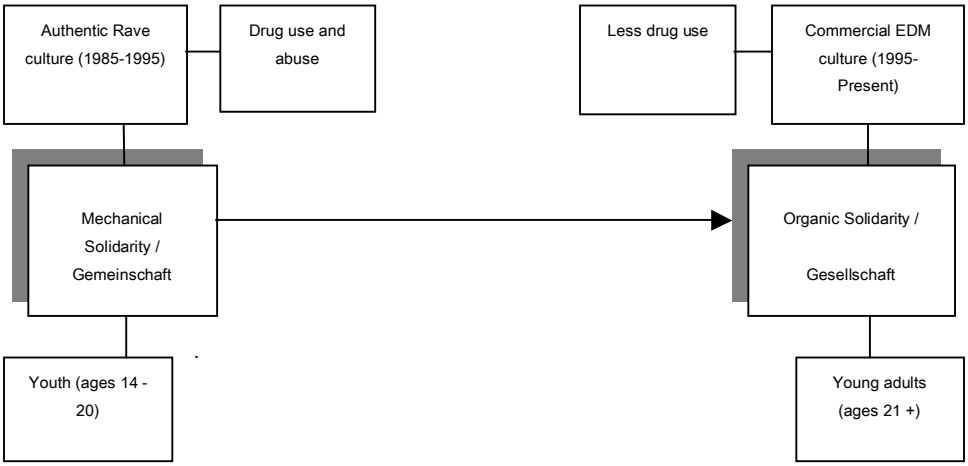
The EDM scene provides a unique venue to further explore how solidarity manifests itself in spheres of popular culture. The classic work by Tonnies and Durkheim is particularly instructive in understanding this link. The EDM scene can be viewed as initially resembling a gemeinschaft society, or one characterized by a mechanical solidarity. This was during the mid to late 1980s, when the EDM scene featured a smaller, more closely connected community that revolved around underground all-night rave parties. During this time EDM culture was characterized by an *other* identity (Anthias 2002) based on ideologies of community, connection, and an element of underground authenticity (Thornton 1995). In much the same way that religious rituals and gatherings functioned to bolster mechanical solidarity among the aboriginals, the rituals and norms of the rave event bolstered a similar kind of social cohesion during the early, formative stages of the EDM era. This kind of solidarity and connectedness is still present in the current EDM scene. However, it occurs less consistently, and the degree to which it is experienced is contingent on a number of factors (Hutson 1999, 2000; Takahashi and Olaveson 2003).

EDM's more recent transformation to a nightclub-based commercial pop hybrid has further complicated the way that solidarity is experienced (Anderson 2005). The ramification of this change on the way solidarity is experienced is only marginally considered by prior scholarship. During its peak in the mid 1990s, EDM was introduced into mainstream American culture with a surprising degree of commercial success. EDM's increased marketability has subsequently given way to a more diffused and varied

scene, with more diverse typologies of participants and a greater range of norms and behaviors (Anderson 2005). With this shift the EDM scene began to resemble a society characterized by organic solidarity - with the requisite elements of the tension and antagonism that occurs in societies lacking a common conscience collective (Durkheim 1933). The contemporary EDM scene also features the impersonal, fleeting, and self-interested characteristics of Tonnies notion of gesellschaft societies. This is due in large part to the diverse typologies of participants who frequent the more commercially popular nightclub venues where most contemporary EDM events are located (Anderson 2005; Thornton 1995).

For many, however, the contemporary EDM scene still serves as an escape or a momentary respite from the extreme fragmentation in the lives of the participants (Tomlinson 1998) - in effect, an attempt to regain some sense of mechanical solidarity. That is, although both contemporary society and the contemporary EDM scene are characterized by organic solidarity, the EDM scene can also be understood as a setting that rejects this organic state, even as it is defined by it. That is, shortly after the rave scene became increasingly affiliated with mainstream commercial culture, it began losing its appeal among fan loyalists (Thornton 1995). Thus, the fragmentation of the contemporary rave scene into various subgenres of EDM reflects an effort to return to an underground, noncommercial, and more mechanical form of solidarity.[3, 4]

Figure 2.1. Diagram of the Theorized Relationship between Solidarity and Drug Use in the EDM Scene



Solidarity vs. Other Theoretical Perspectives

It should be noted that the classical theories of solidarity (Durkheim 1933; Tonnies 1957) were addressing solidarity among all of society, at the aggregate level. This work, as with other contemporary scholarship on collective identity, is addressing solidarity occurring in a social system at the meso-level. This level of analysis enables the exploration of the solidarity concept with greater specificity, and to uncover other forms it may take. The classical work is intended to function as a loose conceptual framework, guide, or metaphor. The present work is intended to advance and expand the classic concept of solidarity by accounting for forms of solidarity that occur among smaller, peripheral cultural forms.

Whether the feelings of connectedness and euphoria people experience in rave and current EDM culture is naturally occurring or drug induced is best addressed by the theoretical concept of *solidarity* for several reasons. As the previous section

demonstrates, it is an attractive conceptual fit, and this is aided by the fact that the classic work has addressed the mutable nature of solidarity. Furthermore, it is broader in scope than similar theoretical frameworks in other subfields, and hence more applicable to the phenomenon of interest. For example, the concept of collective identity is initially attractive, as empirically, collective identity can surface in a variety of contexts and has been applied at the meso-level. However, the preponderance of literature, both theoretical and empirical, has focused on its connection to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, nationalism, occurring in the context of political mobilization and social movements.[5] The concept has generally not been applied to spheres of popular culture.[6] Further, most of this scholarship fails to address the fluid nature of collective associations, and specify the ways that they change over time.[7]

In criminological theory, Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory is also intuitively appealing, especially given the subject matter of this thesis (exploring the connection between solidarity and drug use). However, Hirschi developed the four elements of the social bond in an effort to explain why people conform to conventional society, not bond with "deviant subcultures."[8] Further, Hirschi's social bond theory examines this at the individual level, whereas solidarity addresses phenomena occurring at the group level, where the empirical phenomenon of interest in this paper (solidarity and drug use in the EDM scene) is situated. Moreover, as with most criminological theory, tests of social bond theory have been conducted using quantitative techniques. This presents both a methodological and conceptual mismatch.

Again, the point of contention centers on whether raves and its participants created and experienced a synthetic version of solidarity induced by illegal drugs, or if this solidarity was influenced by factors such as bonding via the music and the establishment of friendships and how this relationship may have changed due to various factors, including the rave's cultural fragmentation. As this section illustrates, these questions are most appropriately addressed using the theoretical concept of solidarity.

Summary

While prior research and theory on rave culture has articulated a link between solidarity and drug use, the degree to which this solidarity is dependent on drug use is unclear. Much of the work conducted in the fields of cultural studies and anthropology contends that this solidarity does not result from drug use. Conversely, empirical research in the field of medical science and theoretical work by postmodernist scholars suggests the opposite, portraying rave culture both as a site of extensive drug consumption, and further, devoid of any greater meaning for its participants.

Prior research has not sought to reconcile this debate, or to consider how the relationship may be complicated by other factors. Further, while cultural studies work posits that rave culture does indeed foster a sense of camaraderie and belonging (Tomlinson 1998), this work fails to link its conclusions to the classical sociological theories of solidarity. The same is true with respect to recent work on other youth cultures (Haenfler 2004; Sarabia and Schriver 2004). This study aims to address this empirical and theoretical void by examining the relationship between drug use and solidarity in the rave culture and the EDM scene.

Notes

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3. Durkheim's (1995) analysis of collective ritual is also relevant in addressing the nature of solidarity in highly dispersed modern collectives. Walter (2001) has recently reminded us that in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, the aboriginal tribe that Durkheim studied was comprised of hunter-gatherers, nomads who rarely met together, and as such, that Durkheim's analysis is highly applicable to modern organic societies and contemporary phenomena.

4. Achieving a true mechanical solidarity at genre-specific EDM events is also challenging, due to their being located in nightclub venues. Although these parties are smaller and more attractive to fan loyalists, the club venues still attract diverse types of people.

5. A small body of literature (Tagg 1994; Russell 1993) addresses the rave as a kind of social movement. According to this work, raves continue in the tradition of countercultural movements of the 1960s and 70s by rejecting the dominant social order of capitalism. The "rave as resistance" stance is a minority position that has been critiqued elsewhere (see Redhead 1993).

6. As noted, see Sarabia and Schriver (2004) and Haenfler (2004) for exceptions.

7. See Snow (2001) for a critique.

8. It is worth noting that although Hirschi's (1969) theory cannot be applied to address solidarity and connectedness within a peripheral cultural collective such as the EDM scene, it is conceivable that one would become attracted to EDM culture due in part to low levels of attachment and commitment to conventional society.

Chapter 3

ANALYTIC APPROACH

Method

In 2003 Anderson (2005) launched an ethnographic study of the EDM scene in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The research project was approved by University IRB. The focus of Anderson's investigation was on the cultural fragmentation of the rave scene and the forces of agency behind its transformation. Anderson combined three sources of information: in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and direct observation. I joined the project late in 2004 as the data collection was winding down, and was trained by Anderson in the ethnographic method. The present study is a secondary analysis of the initial ethnography. The subjects pertinent to this thesis (belonging, drug use, and change) were addressed in the original ethnography.

Anderson's study is a peopled ethnography (Fine 2003). A peopled ethnography focuses primarily on providing a conceptual understanding of the phenomena under examination. The approach is theoretically driven rather than functioning only to provide a descriptive narrative of the phenomenon as more traditional ethnographies have.[9] In a peopled ethnography, an understanding of the phenomena under examination and its theoretical implications are grounded in field notes, interview extracts, and any texts produced by group members. A peopled ethnography is based largely on the observation of an interacting group in its natural setting, where the researcher can explore the norms and routines of behavior. Finally, peopled ethnographies are located within, and collect

information from, multiple research sites. These data meet all of the criteria of a peopled ethnography.

Approach to Interviews

Anderson interviewed a sample of 27 respondents and 22 key informants (or insiders) in the EDM scene in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Respondent interviews were face-to-face and lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. These interviews were semi-structured and conducted in a private but informal environment, allowing the interviewees to speak freely. The respondent interviews were tape-recorded by mutual consent and transcribed verbatim. These interviews were also documented in a field journal as they took place, and a second more interpretive version was recorded the following day on a personal computer. This allowed for elaboration on the interviews shortly after they took place.[10] This approach (initial 'live' note-taking, followed by a more detailed iteration) was used with all three forms of data.

The key informants / insiders were interviewed on multiple occasions and communication was often ongoing throughout the course of the study. A less formal approach to interviewing was used with the key informants. Longer discussions or conversations were sometimes tape-recorded, but not in all instances. Shorter discussions or conversations, as well as the longer ones, were documented in a field journal as they took place, and were elaborated upon afterward. The names of all respondents and key informants were changed to pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

Respondents

Respondents provided information about their background, living situation, their involvement and interaction in the EDM scene personally as well as their perceptions of it, and experiences with drugs and other illicit activities. The respondents were selected using an ethnographic mapping / maximum variation sampling method in order to secure racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the EDM scene in Philadelphia. All of these respondents were over 18 years of age and were active in the local EDM scene of Philadelphia. They were recruited for participation during direct observation at EDM events or were referred by key informants.

The mean age of the respondents is 26.5, with an age range of 22-34. This is predictable, as the nightclub-based variant of rave is most common in Philadelphia, and these clubs are generally 21+ venues. As such, the respondent pool reflects a young adult culture. The socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds of the respondents are not as predictable as their ages. Prior work has noted that early raves in the UK attracted racially diverse groups from primarily working class backgrounds (Reynolds 1998). While there is moderate racial diversity in the EDM scene in Philadelphia, particularly in some of the subgenres (i.e. Drum and Bass), the predominant demographic group tends to be white males. White females are the second most prevalent group. Asians and African Americans are the most prevalent minority groups, and these groups are comprised of mostly males.

Anderson's respondents are 62% male (7 white, 7 black, 3 Asian) and 38% female (8 white, 2 black). Prior research has also found that the organizers, promoters,

and DJs in the scene are predominantly male (Reynolds 1998). The respondent pool of the present study reflects this as well. Eleven of the 27 respondents were DJs. Of these 11 there were five (45%) white males, two black males, one Asian male, and two white females. There were three promoters in the sample, and all were male (2 white, 1 Asian). While the respondent pool does reflect this race-sex breakdown, minorities were over-recruited based on the sampling strategy.

Table 3.1. Breakdown of Respondent Demographic Characteristics.

Race / Sex	Fan	DJ	Promoter	#
White Male	2	3	2	8
White Female	7	1	.	8
Black Male	2	4	1	7
Black Female	1	1	.	2
Asian Male	1	2	.	3
Total				27

The interview portion of the study collected extensive background information about the respondents, enabling me to examine their life trajectory with regard to their family relationships, school and work, and involvement with religion. Fifty-seven percent (33% female, 67% male, 41% black, 59% white) of the respondents noted a weak or problematic relationship with their family. The most commonly reported instances of tumultuous family relationships were the absence of a relationship with one parent or stepparent due to divorce or other factors. Nonspecific familial alienation was also

reported. Forty-two percent reported strong or close familial / parental relationships (33% female, 67% male, 88% white, 12% Asian).

With respect to social class, respondents comprised primarily the middle and, to a lesser degree, working classes. Most of the respondents had high levels of educational attainment, regardless of stability of family. Ninety-five percent had graduated high school and 63% had some education at the college level. Level of employment spanned from working class (ex: waitress, bartender, health services, electrician, retail), to middle class and white collar (ex: computer systems administration and analysis, interior design, market research and nightclub owner). Level of employment or educational attainment did not vary significantly by race or sex.

With respect to substance use, respondent use ranged from non-existent to moderate. Ninety percent reported drug use at some time in their life (68% male, 32% female, 71% white, 29% black). Level of use ranged from semi-regular to more frequent.[11] Sixty-eight percent of the respondents specifically addressed the onset of their drug use. Among these respondents, the average age of onset was 18, with a range of 13-25. Marijuana and MDMA were most frequently noted as the first drugs used. Marijuana was associated with a younger age of onset (mean = 16.5) and often corresponded with underage alcohol use. MDMA was associated with an older age of onset (mean = 21). A smaller number of the respondents also noted using LSD (3) and cocaine (3) when discussing the onset of their substance use, and their mention typically corresponded with poly-substance use. There were no race or sex differences in age of onset.

Regarding current drug use, respondents reported using marijuana, alcohol, ecstasy, cocaine, mushrooms, ketamine (Special K), crystal methamphetamine, and alcohol, but levels of use were varied. Twenty-seven percent reported having quit all substance use, or reported alcohol use only, having quit other illegal drug use. Current use of cocaine, MDMA, mushrooms, ketamine and crystal methamphetamine was reported among 59% of respondents. With the exception of cocaine, none of the respondents reported regular use of these substances. Use was generally reported as occasional or infrequent (yearly, semi-yearly), or not elaborated upon. Cocaine use was reported occurring monthly or semi-monthly. Regular (daily, semi-weekly, or weekly) marijuana use was reported among 22% of the respondents. All of those who reported regular marijuana use were male.

Key Informants

Anderson's 'key informants' consisted of contacts initially made during the preliminary stages of the project. The key informant sample was comprised of DJs, promoters, producers, record store employees and fan loyalists with a long trajectory in rave scene. Geographically, all of the 22 key informants were locally situated in Philadelphia or the surrounding metropolitan area. Several of the key informants were affiliated with an EDM record store that serves as the hub of EDM culture in Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia record store initially served as the central location of the ethnography, and conversations with key informants then snowballed into interviews with other fans (the respondents). Due to their unique position in the scene and

commitment to it, the key informants were able to provide detailed testimony and information on how and why the scene has changed over time. Further, their greater professional and personal stake in the EDM scene afforded Anderson the ability to view the scene and how it has changed from a different standpoint than that of a more casual fan.

With respect to age, 6 of the key informants were between 20-25 years old, 8 were between 26-30 years old, and 8 were between 31- 40 years old. Prior work has noted that the organizers, promoters, and DJs in the EDM scene are predominantly male (Reynolds 1998). As with the respondents, the key informant pool of the present study reflects this. Anderson's key informants were mainly white (82%) and male (59%). Six of the 22 key informants were electronic dance music producers. All of the producers were white males. Five of the informants were DJs. Of these five, there were three white males, one white female, and one Asian male. Another five were promoters. Of this group, there was one white male, three white females, and one black male. The remaining six key informants were fan loyalists and former ravers.[12] Of these fans, there were three white males, one white female, one black male, and one Asian male. [13]

Table 3.2. Breakdown of Key Informant Demographic Characteristics.

Race / Sex	Fan	DJ	Producer	Promoter	#
White Male	3	3	6	1	13
White Female	1	1	.	3	5
Black Male	1	.	.	1	2
Asian Male	1	1	.	.	2
Total					22

The key informants ranged more broadly across social class than the respondents. Some had high levels of educational attainment, while others had no post-secondary education. Most were employed in the EDM scene in some respect (as DJs, promoters, producers, freelance web designers), but had other jobs that they relied on more heavily for financial support. None of the informants relied completely on the EDM scene for financial support. [14]

With respect to substance use, most of the key informants who discussed their use, particularly the DJs, were not extensive drug users. They may have been at one time, especially those active during the rave era of the early to mid 1990s and who have remained involved in the EDM scene, but their use has lessened over time. Generally speaking, information on personal drug use among the key informants was not as nearly as detailed as among the respondents due to the fact that key informants were primarily intended as a resource to document how and why the rave scene has changed, not address the specifics of their personal drug use. Among some key informants, the subject of drug

use was not addressed at all. Others addressed the presence of drug use in the greater EDM scene, but not their personal use.[15]

Direct Observation

Anderson also conducted direct observations of 33 EDM events in the city of Philadelphia. Information from the direct observations documented how the organizational structure (social and physical) of the venues and events influence notions of solidarity, and how notions of solidarity differ by the type of event attended. All direct observations were recorded in a field journal as they took place, and again, a more detailed iteration of these notes was typed on a personal computer the following day. Time spent engaged in direct observation ranged from 2.5 to 4.5 hours, with an average time of 3.6 hours. Direct observations were classified into five different types of events: 1) weeklies, 2) monthlies, 3) superstar one-offs, 4) nouveau raves, and 5) underground parties.[16]

Table 3.3. Breakdown of Direct Observation at EDM Events.

Type of Event	# Attended	Mean Hrs. of Obs.
Weeklies	8	2.5
Underground Party	2	3
Monthlies	10	3
Superstar One-Off	8	4.5
Corporate Rave	5	5
Total	33	3.6

Weeklies are weekly hosted, genre-specific events that are most typically frequented by loyal participants who are closely connected to other attendees, club staff, or the hired performers – most often through friendship networks. They are held in smaller club venues and attendance is typically low. *Underground parties* are similar to weekly club events in this regard. The primary difference is that these events are not as well publicized or promoted. These events typically feature more EDM insiders. *Monthlies* are similar to weekly and underground parties in terms of the type of venue. The major difference is that they often feature performers with a national or international reputation, and are somewhat better attended than weeklies.

Superstar one-offs feature a more diverse crowd, comprised of eclectic social groups. Generally speaking, these events are more commercially marketable and as such, they are held in more commercially popular venues. These kinds of clubs have different rooms, each one featuring different genres of EDM, and a main room featuring several commercially successful DJ performers. Venues with genre-specific rooms under the same roof can often feature a kind of tension, which is amplified if the genres are ideologically different. The most common occurrence of this phenomenon is the featuring of various (two or three) genre-specific EDM rooms and a hip-hop room in the same venue, or club. This is typically employed as a marketing tactic by club owners in order to increase profit.

Conversely, *corporate raves* are large, multi-room / multi-genre events that attempt to mirror the illicit, authentic raves of the late 1980s / early 1990s, but are housed in commercially marketable, legitimate club venues. Although they are indeed multi-

genre events, they do not feature hip-hop, and there is blending or crossover of various genres, and of the musical interests of the attendants. These attendees at these events are generally the most racially, geographically and socially diverse of those previously mentioned, and a large portion of the attendees are loyal fans that grew up attending authentic raves. Attendance at these events is usually in the thousands.

Data Summary

In all, Anderson conducted roughly three years of intensive fieldwork. This produced over 600 pages of hand-written notes from in-depth interviews with 27 respondents and 22 informants / insiders, over 100 pages of electronically typed, single-spaced notes from direct observation of the 33 EDM events and key informant interviews, as well as numerous, uncounted hours of informal interaction at an EDM record store (one of the best and most respected on the east coast) where the study was based, and roughly 750 single-spaced electronic pages of interview transcripts from the 27 respondents.

Analysis

All of the transcribed interviews and field notes were then coded and analyzed for solidarity, drug use, and change with the qualitative computer software program *Atlas.ti*. First, a key word list was generated to obtain indicators of solidarity, drug use and change. Words such as bond, belonging, together, friendship, connection, unity, etc. were used as indicators of solidarity. Words such as change, different, etc. were used to obtain indications of change. Words such as drugs, cocaine, ecstasy, pills, etc. were used as indicators of drug use. All of these words were located in the transcribed documents

using an open coding method. During the coding process a conceptual category emerged that functioned as the antithesis of solidarity. This concept refers to the distancing of oneself from the EDM scene via the erosion of bonds, friendships, negative consequences experienced, etc. This category was termed *Detachment*. The files were also coded for social class and background characteristics of the interview respondents, for the purpose of better describing the data.

After the files were initially coded using the keyword search, these codes were further collapsed to generate a more parsimonious theoretical model. For example, when respondents described bonding with the music, or being affectively moved by the music - rather than people in the scene - these instances were located and recoded as *Solidarity: Connection: Music*. Or, when respondents emphasized friendships they have made, and bonding they have experienced with others, these instances identified and recoded as *Solidarity: Friendship*. Or for instance, when respondents described feeling a detachment based on certain experiences with their own drug use, or witnessing other individuals in the scene over use drugs, these instances were located and recoded as *Detachment: Drug Use*. This strategy prevented an abundance of synonymous codes based solely on keywords, focusing instead on the substantive content of the dialog. In this way, the patterns were more easily identifiable.

These new conceptual codes were then used as a guide to map broader conceptual categories. The broad categorical headings were *Solidarity, Detachment, Drug use*, and *Background characteristics*. Under each of these categorical headings are dimensions of these 4 categories. The actual codes (described earlier) were then grouped under these

dimensions, along with definitions. Organizing the data in this manner facilitated a grounded theory approach to the analysis. To view this stage of the analysis in its entirety, please consult the appendix of this thesis (pg. 54).

Solidarity was defined on a number of different dimensions among the respondents and informants. The most prominent report of solidarity was feeling a connection to others because of the music, and interacting with regard to the music, by engaging in activities such as dancing, talking about it, or simply listening to it. Solidarity was also reported in the form of friendships people made through the EDM scene, as well as through the social interactions that occurred both in the EDM scene and outside of it. Solidarity was also partially contingent one's stake in the scene – that is, how involved in the scene they are. Generally, those who were more personally and professionally involved in the EDM scene reported higher levels of solidarity, distinguished from non-committed "others." Finally, solidarity was reported in terms of the affective state of the respondents and informants. That is, respondents and informants frequently referred to experiencing a connection to the scene due to intangible influences. Solidarity was reportedly experienced due in part to the atmosphere or vibe – that is, the aesthetic quality or mood – of a particular EDM event. More generally, the PLUR (peace, love, unity, and respect) ethos was also addressed, referring to the mood or ethos of the rave era as well as the current EDM scene.

Notes

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9. See Snow, Morrill, and Anderson (2003) for more on this.

10. Early in the project Anderson adopted a comprehensive style of note-taking (see Wolfinger 2002) , which entailed documenting as much as possible about what was seen or heard. As the project continued, Anderson became more of an insider to the scene and shifted toward a more "salience hierarchy" (Wolfinger 2002) style of note-taking: that is, writing about unique things experienced while conducting fieldwork.

11. "Semi-regular drug use" is defined as monthly use of one or more illegal substances (other than underage alcohol consumption) for a minimum period of one year. "Frequent drug use" is defined as weekly or semi-daily use of one or more illegal substances for a minimum period of one year.

12. One of the key informants, in fact, made this distinction. "True" fans are called ravers, or loyalists, and they were involved in the rave era of the early to mid 1990s. They will travel to hear certain DJs, and treat the DJ as the main attraction, i.e., the star or shaman. More casual fans do not value DJs in this manner, but rather as a person who entertains and provides a service for them. Also, casual fans settle for mainstream club music from major production labels. Ravers or loyalists search out underground music.

13. Each of the key informants classified as fans also worked in various capacities in the local EDM scene of Philadelphia (e.g. employee at a club or record store) (Anderson 2005).

14. Social class was qualitatively determined from contextual information in the interview notes in various interviews, and subsequently generalized to the entire sample of key informants. There was not a protocol used to assess class background or level of employment, but this information was provided for roughly half of the informants.

15. According to Anderson's field journal, the general pattern is that the rave DJ used some club drugs and gradually gave them up as their commitment to the DJ career escalated. They now view drug use as a part of the scene that creates problems. For more detailed information, see Anderson (2005).

16. For a more detailed discussion of EDM event typology, see Anderson (2005).

Chapter 5

FINDINGS

As predicted, this examination revealed that solidarity in the EDM scene is complicated and multifaceted. When solidarity occurs in the EDM scene (and there are numerous instances when it does not), the form that solidarity takes, and the degree to which it is experienced, is contingent upon a number of factors including, but not limited to drug use. In short, the relationship between drug use and solidarity in the current EDM scene is not as straightforward as prior work has suggested.

Solidarity and Drug Use

The majority of respondents and key informants reported having taken drugs at an EDM event, and noted that this made them more sociable and open to meeting people. This was particularly common when discussing the earlier part of their trajectory in the EDM scene. However, whether this feeling connectedness would have occurred without the use of drugs is unclear. What is clear is that despite the fact that drugs were taken, these experiences were also equated with a greater sense of belonging and of being part of something larger. The early, formative experiences in particular, were discussed with sense of nostalgia. These experiences, regardless of the extent to which drugs played a role, were discussed as having a deeper meaning. Jim, a 32 year-old black male fan and former DJ, related:

> People were generally friendly, and maybe it was the drugs they were on, and I was on, but it was just a very sociable, very fraternal environment. People were hugging each other, and they were dancing all night, and they were jumping and screaming…

Suzanne, a 24 year-old black female related:

> The whole thing about that time, it was just very exciting. It was kind of like, openness. You knew that when you were there, you kind of knew that you were never going to get to do this again and you kind of felt you were a part of some movement. But everybody kind of knew that they're not going to let this go on forever because it was just debauchery. It was crazy. It was really crazy. It was fun.

Whether the solidarity taking place in such instances is the result of drug use is debatable. While drug use did indeed occur at these early rave events, this testimony indicates the experience of solidarity was also equated with feelings of being a part of something more affectively meaningful. In any case, it is apparent from the aforementioned testimony that the larger EDM scene in which these drug experiences were situated – that is, the context in which the use occurred - was viewed as a legitimate site for experiential bonding, regardless of the degree to which drug use played a part. Indeed, other respondents were quick to stress that the solidarity experienced at EDM events is largely attributable to the music. There were numerous instances where the role of drug use is downplayed, and portrayed as serving only to enhance the connection to the music. This is particularly apparent in the contemporary EDM scene Carter, a 24 year-old white male fan and promoter noted the following regarding drug use at the EDM events that he is involved with:

> It's not the main focus of the night. It happened in the rave scene too because when I first started going to parties, it was like, "yeah, a lot of people are doing drugs." I was doing drugs you know, but if you weren't on drugs you could still have a good time. It wasn't about the drugs. The drugs enhanced the experience.

> The drugs help you expand your mind in a way, I know it's kind of cliché to say that, but they help you see certain connections you know.

While this testimony provides tentative support for the prior theoretical and conceptual work illustrating the interconnectedness of the drug experience with the feeling of connection to the music (Hammersley, Ditton, and Smith 1999; Moul 1999, Reynolds 1998), stating that the experience of solidarity and connectedness is primarily, or solely, a function of the synthetic experience of MDMA or some other drug use, as this prior work has, is presumptuous at best. Such claims are especially dubious considering that most of the scholarly work asserting this is devoid of any empirical research to support the contention.[17]

This investigation also revealed that while drug use is indeed one source of the solidarity experienced at EDM events, there were also myriad reports of experiencing a feeling of connectedness and solidarity with the music while not engaging in any drug use. Daniel, a 22 year-old white male EDM fan related:

> I could leave this interview and I could go to any club around here and if they were playing good enough music I could stay there till the wee hours of the morning, not having talked to anyone, not having drank anything, not having taken anything, and just gone and expressed myself... I'm not going out to a club just to go because everyone's there. I'm going to go for the music...

Solidarity: Other Influences

While it is apparent that drug use did indeed play some part in the scenarios described earlier, experiences at EDM events often function as the basis for friendships and social interaction on a continuing basis. There were myriad instances of respondents discussing a sense of solidarity experienced with friends and others not only in the

context of the EDM scene, but outside of the scene as well, and these friendships go beyond drug use.

This form of solidarity occurred in varied social contexts, and technology proved to play a major role. Specifically, the Internet proved to be a major role in facilitating solidarity and group cohesion outside of EDM events. In numerous instances, one's initial involvement with the EDM scene began in cyberspace, or the internet functioned to keep them connected to the scene. Many reported networking and connecting, and meeting new people through several different web-based chat rooms and message boards. Membership in many of these groups is substantial. Regina, a 23-year-old white female noted the following about her association in one of these groups:

> It was like pulling teeth to get anyone to go to clubs to listen to dance music. A lot of it changed when I joined [a web-based EDM chatroom]. And I met a ton of people that are into the music, that I met, that I would, I would say, what, third year, fourth year in school, started hanging out with them. And you know, they would pick me up, and I would go off with them on my own, and the friends that I lived with just couldn't believe it.

This manner of connectedness does not only revolve around music and does not only occur in the context of the EDM scene. These people maintain friendships outside of the scene, engage in other conventional activities such as dining out, and even organize benefits for the public. Amy, a 24 year-old white female fan noted the following about her connection to an EDM community:

> Um, it kind of is its own little group, or community. Lately since I've been hanging out a lot with them, I've found it even more so. You know that they're just, you know they all hang out together a lot like outside of the club scene, which I think is totally cool. This group, they threw an event called Give, and it was an outdoor concert and there was all kinds of stuff there…They had DJs, they had people dancing, they had like a drum circle, and they were taking donations for Children's Hospital. They do things like that.

In addition to forming friendships in the scene and maintaining social bonds in contexts other than EDM events, there were also more general reports of connection to the scene based on a shared feeling of community with whichever particular genre of the scene one associated with. Various subgenres of EDM have subsequently allowed for the formation of various cliques, and these cliques often become tight-knit communities. It is among member of cliques where friendships are often the strongest. Hamilton, a 28-year-old Asian male DJ who is involved in the drum and bass genre of the EDM scene noted:

> I have a lot of really cool friends that I've met... It's almost like very family-like…. It's a cool night, when I go out to Drum and Bass nights. I know everyone and everyone knows everyone. It's like Cheers. You walk in, you know someone, you sit at the bar.

This kind of connectedness based on friendship is particularly notable among those involved in the EDM scene in a professional capacity such as DJs and promoters. Jake, a 29 year-old white male promoter related:

> I think I have the best job in the world. I am very fortunate to know the producers and the DJs that make the music I like, so when I hire them, bring them down, they stay at my house…. I have a very personal relationship with everyone that I work with. It's like a family-type thing.

There were also reports of experiencing a group cohesion based on commonalities shared with other social groups (black, white, gay, etc.) with which one occupies the social space at an EDM event. Daniel, a 22 year-old white male EDM fan articulated this sense of community with regard to attending a certain kind of club:

> I do tend to go more to the gay clubs, it's just that sometimes I tend to enjoy them more because I feel freer to dance the way that I want, dance with whoever I want… so I guess it does feel more communal in that respect… a community kind of underlies it all.

Finally, the relationship between solidarity and drug use is also influenced by event type. For example, at weeklies, mechanical solidarity is most prevalent. The fact that the events take place on weeknights typically assures that only those more dedicated and loyal EDM fans attend these events, and it also ensures that drug use is negligible. Rather, casual alcohol use is most common at these events. This is due in part to the fact that the professionals (DJs, promoters) have more to lose because of drug use at these events, and further, the attendees at these events are more interested in creating a connection to the music. Hamilton, a 28 year-old Asian male DJ noted the following regarding the weeklies he hosts, and how they differ from other types of events:

> Yeah, I think it's the venue and the atmosphere. Um, myself, I'm trying to target an older, more professional crowd. Any kind of, you know, just deliver it to them in a very relaxed setting atmosphere where everyone can relate to it…

A 23 year-old white male discussed his alcohol use at weekly events, and how excessive use is viewed as promoting the wrong kind of image, and will be sanctioned:

> It was funny; I was kind of drunk on Wednesday. I go to this party and [a promoter and DJ] was like "dude, you know, reputation, come on" and I was like "ohh, I didn't think about that."

Some findings in this section are consistent with prior research and provide mild support for the claim that drug use has functioned, at least in part, to enhance the solidarity and connectedness experienced at EDM events. However, these experiences are generally referred to retrospectively in the past tense, and relate to one's entry into the scene. Even then, the experience of solidarity is equated with being a part of a movement, or a kind and fraternal environment. Then, as one's trajectory in the scene then further takes its course, other influences on solidarity emerge that are only marginally related to

drug use. So it appears that drug use is only one of many other variables shaping solidarity and group cohesion in the EDM scene.

Detachment and Drug Use

The prior section illustrates that the relevance of drug use in facilitating solidarity in the EDM scene, particularly over time, is questionable. Indeed, this investigation revealed that extensive drug use over time can often have the opposite effect. Prior theoretical and empirical work (Melechi 1993; Reynolds 1998; Tomlinson 1998) on the rave scene has not documented this effect. In the current EDM scene, drug use had unanticipated effect of eroding that sense of solidarity and connectedness, and facilitating detachment from the scene. Both respondent and key informant views on the role of drug use changed throughout their trajectory in the scene. As EDM participants grew older, many have become cynical about the place of drug use in both the EDM scene and their own lives. Matt, a 25 year-old white male DJ further elaborated on the way in which drugs play a part in dismantling solidarity and group cohesion in the EDM scene:

> These kids, they're all cracked out, like borderline drooling on themselves. And I'm like, (sarcastic tone) yeah, that's what I want to do. Like, what the hell's the point in that? But they're just going…they say, "Let's go get fucked up," you know? Like nowadays, people are more about going out and getting fucked up, and trying, you know, to meet guys or girls or whatever, you know, and it's like the music is more of a background thing.

This is especially true among those with a greater personal and professional stake in the scene, such as DJs, producers and promoters (Anderson 2005). Media portrayal of EDM events in the U.S. has emphasized hedonistic drug use, and this in turn has led to numerous legal and economic problems for the scene. This led to a sharp negative reaction toward drug use by professionals involved in the scene. This stance was adopted

by a number of the key informants, particularly professional DJs. It is not the case that they experienced an erosion of solidarity or detachment from the EDM scene itself. Rather, they attempted to use their agency to disentangle or detach the EDM scene from drug use.

James, a key informant DJ, discussed having seen people laid out on the dance floor from drugs. He claims "they are not hearing the music." This suggests that those who use drugs to a problematic degree and are not primarily identifying with the music, are cultural aliens. Other key informants talked about how people at EDM parties in the past were able to control their ecstasy use and that it wasn't a problem, but that today's generation cannot control their use. The implication here is that a certain class of people can use the drug without problems and a certain class cannot. Here, this ideology is situated to a cohort. There is a strong message here about personal responsibility. That is, for people to stop their drug use or they will ruin EDM culture.[18]

In several instances, the presence of drugs in the current EDM scene inhibited participation among former users, despite the fact that they still share an appreciation for the music. A similar attitude is evident among the portion of the respondent pool that did not use drugs at any point during their trajectory in the scene. Those who had ceased abusing drugs or were not drug users reported feeling annoyed or uncomfortable about the presence of drugs in the current EDM scene, and as a result, reported feeling no connection or sense of solidarity. In addition to inhibiting their involvement in EDM events, former abusers also chose to isolate themselves from others in the scene that use or are perceived to use drugs. This facilitated the erosion of solidarity, and their

subsequent detachment from the scene. William, a 24-year-old white male expressed the following regarding friendships:

> …my whole club life was artificial, you know what I mean, like, that was my life. That was artificial to me. I mean, I've made amazing, lifelong friendships for one night with people that I never saw again. It just doesn't match.

Detachment: Other Influences

It is clear from the testimony presented in the preceding section that drug use has been a key contributor to the erosion or deterioration of solidarity in the EDM scene. However, as was the case with solidarity, there were myriad instances where erosion or deterioration of solidarity was the result of other social forces. This stemmed in large part from the fragmentation and specialization of the larger rave scene into smaller, genre-specific scenes. Further, due to in large part to various legal and socio-economic factors, the nucleus of the EDM scene has splintered into the five different types of club events outlined earlier (Anderson 2005). This nightclub-based, specialized variant of the EDM scene has resulted in substantially smaller gatherings than the illicit raves of the 1980s and early 1990s. As Durkheim (1933) noted, specialization of this kind is the key indicator of organic solidarity.

Fragmentation has also led to the establishment of genre-specific cliques, or groups who voluntarily associate with one style of electronic dance music, either as a promoter, a professional DJ, or fan. Genre specialization has created fan factions, and disdain for other dissimilar factions. Again, this kind of specialization and splintering of the scene mirrors a kind of gesellschaft society (Toinnes 1957). It also supports Durkheim's (1933) assertion that societies lacking a common conscience collective will

be characterized by hostility and antagonism. Theodora, a 26-year-old black female fan addressed the lack of solidarity in the contemporary EDM scene:

> You don't really see that type of unity anymore between people. Especially here, when you go out to the club, it's not like how things used to be where everybody kind of like knew each other, wanted to know each other. It's not like that anymore. Now it's like you go there and…everybody's like a loner, you know what I mean, like everybody's real clique when you go out. Like you have like this group stays with this group, this group stays with that group, that kind of thing. And back a long time ago, like when I first started going out it wasn't like that.

In addition to aesthetic separations among fans, fragmentation of the scene by genre has also manifested itself in a more competitive nature among those professionally associated with a genre (DJs, promoters, etc.). Hamilton, a 28-year-old Asian male DJ noted:

> There's certain crews that overshadow a certain kind of music just because they don't like it and they want to promote a different style. That's where the separation is, you know. Um, also crews that have weeklies, everyone has their own clique that comes out to each other's night. It's like "I'm not going to go to that night because so and so is promoting, I'm going out to this night. The scene needs like a big club and that's probably holding it back like the whole dance scene... It's stopping the scene from thriving…

The erosion of solidarity stemming from the fragmentation of the scene is further exacerbated by the commercialization and marketing of the EDM scene to mainstream society. Many whose personal and social identities were formed in part around the EDM scene feel an increasing disconnection and alienation from it, due in large part to its increased commercial appeal, as well as the eclectic social groups who now affiliate themselves with the scene. Jim, a 32 year-old black male fan and former DJ noted the following:

> Yeah, the commercialization of the scene kind of takes away from why people are really there. Umm, you can kind of flip it around, like, well, you know, it's really

helping the scene by introducing it to a lot more people, but basically there's no intimacy.

Findings in this section have elucidated that, in addition to enhancing the solidarity and group cohesion in the dance scene, drugs also contribute to detachment from the scene and erosion of solidarity. This effect of drug use has not been previously documented. Unlike the relationship between solidarity and drug use, which is typically referred to in the past tense, detachment or erosion of solidarity is often referred to in the present tense, or occurs later in one's trajectory in the EDM scene. Further, it is evident that detachment from the scene as a result of drugs takes different forms depending on one's personal or professional stake in the scene, as well as one's personal experiences with drugs.

As with solidarity, there are other variables that have contributed to detachment that are only marginally related to drug use. Again, as with the preceding section, drug use is only one aspect related to the erosion of solidarity in, and detachment from, the EDM scene. Detachment is associated with a number of other variables such as fragmentation and genre specialization among fans and professionals and the mainstream commercialization of the EDM scene.

Solidarity, Drug Use, and Change

Patterns of drug use in the EDM scene have also changed, and this change has also had an impact on solidarity. Also, although drug use is still present in the contemporary EDM scene, in many instances narratives indicated that alcohol, cocaine and other forms of speed seem to have replaced hallucinogens such as MDMA as the preferred drugs at EDM events. Suzanne, a 24 year-old black female DJ and fan

confirmed the increased prevalence of alcohol and cocaine, but also noted an increase in other kinds of drug use:

> Mostly now everyone just drinks. There is a huge amount of cokeheads and people doing crystal meth that just came out of nowhere…there've always been cokeheads.

The waning popularity of MDMA has ensured that the solidarity experienced in the early, or more formative period of one's trajectory in the rave era is not as common. That is, the change in solidarity that resulted from the change in drug use is largely dependent on both the kind of drug being used (use of different drugs results in different kinds of solidarity) as well as the context (type of EDM event) in which that use occurs. I will begin by addressing the former.

The increased prevalence of cocaine use was found to have a dualistic impact on solidarity, on one hand facilitating it, on the other, dismantling it. Use of cocaine facilitated solidarity and group cohesion because, as a stimulant, cocaine has the effect of enabling clubbers to party longer. Further, cocaine is commonly used at "afterparties" which enables bonding to occur outside the context of an EDM event. In this way, cocaine use facilitates solidarity. Conversely, excessive use is condemned. Cocaine use is accepted, but must be kept in check. Carla, a 28 year-old female fan noted the following regarding cocaine use among her club-going friends:

> Nobody forces anyone but you can see that it's very accepted. It kind scares me how it's accepted. My [EDM] friends are so bad. It just scares me… Two weeks ago I was at my friend's house like at an after-hours gathering and they had like a dinner plate of cocaine. I was like "I need to go." It was bad.

Others reports indicate that cocaine facilitates the erosion of solidarity, but more due to the physiological effects of the drug, and how it makes them feel toward others,

rather from than the social consequences of its overuse. Whereas MDMA use is associated with feelings of euphoria, cocaine use has been linked with feelings of restlessness, irritability, and anxiety (ONDCP 2003 a; ONDCP 2003 b). Aaron, a 23 year-old white male fan noted the following regarding his cocaine use:

> I hate [cocaine] but I've done it, a little bit more than I would have liked to have. I hate it though; it makes me feel so guilty…With coke it's so vile, so stingy, it's rotten. You don't feel personal with people.

With respect to the increased prevalence of alcohol use, the documented venue shift to licensed nightclubs as the primary venues for EDM events has made the use of alcohol at these gatherings commonplace. Its use has subsequently been accepted by both fan loyalists and professionals. Many DJs reported casual alcohol consumption during performances, and fan use ranged from moderate to heavy. In this sense, the use of alcohol has facilitated solidarity and group cohesion as there are no negative legal consequences for its consumption in commercial venues. Douglas, a 32 year-old black male DJ elaborated on the role of alcohol in facilitating solidarity:

> Some weeks I'll buy, you know, fifteen people drinks. You know, [the club], they give me a nice allowance to buy people drinks every week. So you know, I might buy 15-20 people a shot or a drink one week, and then the next week, it's another 15-20 people, and then throughout the course of the month, I probably hit all the regulars. It's nice. It helps me connect with everyone a little better.

Conversely, the availability of alcohol at EDM events has increased the attractiveness of these events to more diverse social groups who wouldn't attend EDM events if they were not held in commercial venues. Both direct observation and interview data revealed that certain social groups that attend dance events are not there to connect with others through music. Specifically, superstar one-offs usually have extended hours

licenses where alcohol can be served until 3 or 4 AM. Due in large part to this factor, the demographic makeup of dance events often shifts at around 2 AM when conventional bars and other nightclubs stop serving alcohol. Many of these patrons are not ready to cease drinking and / or socializing, and subsequently gravitate to EDM venues so that they can consume more alcohol and party longer. Evidence of this phenomenon was well documented, as was its effect on the social cohesion of the event. Carla, a 28 year-old white female fan described this occurrence at an after hours club:

> In beginning of the night I love the people, it's a great time, I'm having a good time, and 1:30 rolls around and the [bar] crowd starts coming in just because it is open until 3:30 and they serve the drinks until 3 o'clock and everything changes. It becomes more crowded number one so you get pushed a lot, and people become ruder... We get pushed out of the way, we get hit on, it just gets more annoying, and I usually like to get out of there when those people start coming.

The type of solidarity prevalent at superstar one-off events typically mirrors a gesellschaft society – that is, one in which people conglomerate largely for reasons of instrumental self-interest and to advance individual goals (meeting romantic partners, consuming alcohol, etc.). Whether this kind of solidarity manifests itself positively or negatively is further contingent on the venue, or club, in which the event is hosted. Venues with genre-specific rooms under the same roof can often feature a kind of tension, which is amplified if the genres are ideologically different. The most common occurrence of this phenomenon is the featuring of various (two or three) genre-specific EDM rooms and a hip-hop room in the same venue, or club. While this is typically employed as a marketing tactic by club owners in order to increase profit, it also has the effect of creating a kind of antagonism and hostility, or feeling of disdain among the EDM attendees. This works to diffuse the feeling of solidarity and connectedness, as

there is no collective ideology at these types of events. A male DJ elaborated on the effect of Hip Hop sharing venues with EDM:

> You started seeing a slow trickle in of little hip-hoppers hanging over in the corner. And then like it slowly started to get a little bit bigger and then problems just started arising, you know what I mean. I mean, I love hip-hop music. I love the music. But, you know, I don't like the emotions or whatever it is that people are feeding off this and causing it to be pushed out onto everyone else.

This section illustrates how solidarity in the EDM scene has changed - and in many instances been compromised - with the decline of the rave era and the subsequent venue shift of EDM events to commercial nightclubs. This venue shift is also related to changes in patterns of drug use, which have further impacted notions of solidarity. While solidarity is indeed still present in the contemporary EDM scene, its forms are more varied, and there are a greater number of factors that impact its prevalence, or whether it is prevalent at all.

In certain instances this change has enabled a return to a kind of mechanical solidarity, as is evidenced at smaller events such as weeklies. Here some casual drug or alcohol use may occur, but it is not the key influence on solidarity. On the other hand, this change and venue shift has also created a kind of gesellschaft type of solidarity, where there is no evidence of group cohesion. This is typically found at superstar one-offs, which draw a more varied crowd. Drug and alcohol use at these events is more substantial, and there is often an ideological clash between those who are there for the music vs. those who are there primarily to abuse alcohol and drugs and meet potential sex partners.

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17. Addressing the lack of empirical research in the rave literature, Hutson (1999:60) notes that "…those who write about the rave rarely solicit the voices and experiences of people who actually go to raves."

18. This paragraph was adapted from an entry in the second (electronically typed) iteration of Anderson's field journal.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Past research on the ways in which drug use impacts notions of solidarity and group cohesion in a peripheral cultural body, and how this relationship may have changed over time, has generally not been done. I have conducted a secondary analysis of a multi-method ethnography to address this relationship. Several clear conclusions have emerged from the results of this research.[19, 20]

Review of Findings

These findings suggest that the relationship between drug use and solidarity is complicated by a number of interrelated factors. There is some evidence supporting the contention that drug use is responsible, at least in part, for the solidarity and sense of cohesion reported at EDM events. However, the extent to which this solidarity is a function of drug use is unclear. It is possible to conclude that drug use plays a part in its manifestation, but this investigation has found that other factors are responsible as well. Social interaction, friendships, the music, the internet, event type, as well as personal and/or professional involvement in EDM were also largely responsible for shaping solidarity and group cohesion in the scene. Indeed, these drug experiences are generally referred to retrospectively in the past tense, and relate to one's entry into the scene. Even then, the experience of solidarity is equated with being a part of a movement, or a kind

and fraternal environment. As one's trajectory in the scene then further takes its course, other influences on solidarity become more prominent and are only marginally related to drug use. As such it is possible to conclude that drug use is only one of many factors working shaping solidarity and group cohesion in the EDM scene and moreover, that its importance diminishes over time. In no way did this investigation find that drug use is the only factor influencing solidarity, or even the most important one.

This investigation also found that drug use contributed to the erosion of solidarity and detachment in the EDM scene, particularly over time. This finding is particularly important because it demonstrates that drug use has in fact had the opposite effect as that suggested by prior work (Melechi 1993; Rietveld 1993). In many instances, respondent and key informant views on drug use in the EDM scene changed with their trajectory in the scene. As EDM participants aged and their personal and/or professional commitment to EDM strengthened, many became cynical about the place of drug use in the scene. Some reported feeling no connection to the scene because of prolonged, excessive use of drugs that resulted in negative experiences. Others reported feeling no connection to others in the scene who abuse drugs because they believe drug abuse is not compatible with bonding through music.

These findings are indicative of the waning influence of drugs in the EDM scene. Furthermore, as is the case with solidarity, drug use was not the only factor responsible for the erosion of solidarity and detachment. Factors such as the fragmentation of the rave into various subgenres of EDM, the venue shift from illicit warehouses and factories to legitimate nightclubs and the attendant demographic shift in attendees, as well as the

commercialization of dance music in popular culture all played key roles in dismantling solidarity and group cohesion in the EDM scene.

Theoretical Contribution

It is important to consider what implications these conclusions have for theory. Theoretically, this examination found that drug use has had a dualistic effect on solidarity. In one sense, it has eroded elements of mechanical solidarity, through the introduction of commercial venues, and increased alcohol and cocaine use. At the same time, these factors have enabled the emergence of organic solidarity, due to the subsequent appeal of EDM events to a more diverse range of attendees with competing motives and interests. This kind of organic solidarity is often characterized by hostility and antagonism, as Durkheim (1933) theorized to be the case among societies that lack a common conscience collective. Organic solidarity is also enabled by the fragmentation of the scene into various specialized genres of EDM. As Durkheim (1933) noted, specialization of is one of the key indicators of organic society, and specialization of this kind is indeed present in the current EDM scene.

Interestingly, it is the commercialization of the scene via the shift to nightclub venues that has caused the scene to splinter off and form small communities that specialize in specific genres of EDM. Although specialization of this kind is indicative of organic solidarity, in the EDM scene, this specialization is characterized by elements of mechanical solidarity. That is, the genre groups are comprised of group members who share a similar ideology - their primary motivation for being a part of the scene is for the music. It is at these smaller and less commercially popular events where this can be

ideology can be realized. So it was also the shift of the EDM scene to one theorized variant of organic solidarity – the variant that lacks a common conscience collective – that has enabled a subsequent retreat back to mechanical forms. Therefore it is important to stress that the documented instances of these smaller, more tight-knit and ideologically similar cliques have emerged due in large part to organic nature of the scene. That is, the greater EDM scene is organic or hyper organic, and the smaller genre-specific scenes can be understood as a setting that is both formed by and indicative of this type of solidarity, even as it rejects it. Neither Durkheim (1933) nor Tonnies (1957) theorized how a hyper organic society can subsequently result in the re-emergence of mechanical societies. This investigation demonstrates how this phenomenon is possible at the meso level.

Conclusion

It bears repeating that no existing theoretical or empirical work on rave culture has devoted significant attention to the interplay between the drug use and solidarity, and how this relationship might be affected by numerous other variables. This study clearly illustrates that considering the complicated nature of this interplay in the context of the current EDM scene (and how it has changed) is important in accurately understanding the role of drugs in this young adult culture. Future work on rave culture and drug use would do well to consider how this relationship has been complicated by the numerous other factors considered in this investigation.

Further, no existing theoretical framework in the sociology of culture or collective identity literature applies classical theories of solidarity to youth collectives occurring in spheres of popular culture. This study demonstrates that using classical theories of

solidarity to address empirical phenomena that occur in contemporary spheres of popular culture is both possible and instructive in understanding how these cultural bodies can change over time. It also illustrates that solidarity can morph and shift due to a number of factors, and that the shift from mechanical/gemeinschaft to organic/gesellschaft is not as linear and static as classical theory has proposed. More generally, it is reasonable to assume that the classical theoretical work on solidarity can be applied to examine any number of youth groups that may have traditionally been addressed under the rubric of the "deviant subculture."

More broadly, this study also occupies a distinctive niche in the area of neo-classical cultural studies. It contributes to sociological theory by extending classical work on solidarity, examining how it occurs at the meso-level among peripheral cultural bodies occurring in contemporary society. In doing so this work demonstrates that solidarity is as germane a concept to sociology today as it was at the beginning of the century when the concept was first proposed. Moreover, it is applicable to a wider degree of empirical phenomena than has been previously considered.

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19. There are also several limitations that must be addressed. The first deals with the difficulty in generalizing these findings. As is typical of ethnographic research, this study utilized a very small sample from a localized area. Further, although many of the respondents were recruited live at direct observation of EDM events, other respondents in the sample were drawn from the friendship networks of the key informants. In this sense, participant recruitment mirrored, in part, a snowball sampling technique. As such, these findings are generalizable only to the EDM scene of the city in which the study was conducted.

20. With regard to the direct observation portion of this study, these data are highly dependent on the observations of the researcher. As the ethnographer documents the research site, an internal view is formed. Because of the fluidity of the site, it is difficult to then get a picture of the complete distribution of attitudes in a large and fluid collective body such as an EDM event. During some of the direct observations there were two ethnographers observing one event, and this counteracted bias to some degree. However, it is impossible to eliminate observer bias altogether. Even the multi-site approach to direct observation taken in this does not insulate this work from such bias.

APPENDIX

CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE OF THE ANALYSIS

I. **DIMENSIONS OF SOLIDARITY**

A. Interactive Solidarity (Aspects of solidarity related to interaction and contact with other people)

a. Friends / Social Interaction (connected to the scene via friendships made with others)

b. Connection: social group (connected to the scene based on being part of a specific social group (gay, white, male, etc.)

c. Community (connected to the scene based on the establishment of a clique that may or may not be instrumentally involved in the scene)

d. Chat room (connected to the scene based on networking with others via the internet in EDM-related areas of cyberspace)

e. Job (connected to the scene based on being employed as a DJ, promoter, or producer)

f. Drugs (connected to the scene based on illegal drug use)

B. Intangible Solidarity (Aspects of solidarity related to things that are incapable of being perceived by the senses)

a. Atmosphere / Vibe / PLUR (feel connected to the scene via the aesthetic quality, ethos, or mood, of a particular venue or event)

b. Connection: music (feel connected to the scene based on a serious appreciation and respect for music)

c. Values (feel connected to others in the scene due to shared principles, standards and practices)

II. **DIMENSIONS OF DETACHMENT**

A. Differential Detachment (Erosion of solidarity based on difference and change)

a. Change / Fragmentation (erosion of solidarity based on changes that the scene has undergone in more recent years)
b. Competition (erosion of solidarity based on genre-specific parties and DJs competing against one another)
c. Commercialization (erosion of mechanical solidarity due to the marketability and mainstream appeal of dance music)
d. Clash (erosion of solidarity based largely on the presence of multi-room venues playing HH in a particular room – the 2 styles of music are not ideologically compatible, leading to tension and opposition)

B. Interactive Detachment (Erosion of solidarity based on experiences with, or because of, people and/or occurrences at dance events)
a. Group differences (erosion of solidarity based on the differences among the various social groups (gay, old city, various subgenre) that attend dance music events)
b. People (feeling a disconnect with people involved in the dance scene generally – not group specific)
c. Drug use (erosion of solidarity based on ones experience with drug use in the dance scene, or from being uncomfortable with others use in the scene)
d. Violence (erosion of solidarity based on violence that has occurred at particular venues that host dance events)

III. **DIMENSIONS OF DRUG USE**

A. Personal drug use (Refers to ones own personal experiences with drug use in both in and outside of the EDM scene)
a. Own use (referring to one's own use, in general)
b. Own use: consequences / negative experiences (referring specifically to the negative effects of one's drug use)

B. Others drug use (Refers to others drug use in and outside of the EDM scene)
a. Others use: change (refers to changes over time in friends or acquaintances patterns of drug use)
b. Others use: consequences (refers to the negative effects of others drug use)

C. Scene drug use (Refers to drug use in the EDM scene more generally)
a. Scene use (refers to drug use in the scene in general, that they have either seen, heard, or somehow know about – their perceptions, but grounded in the reality of experience)

b. Scene use: change (refers to how drug use in the scene has changed over time – based on own use, friends use, and other drug use they have seen – again, a perception-based indicator, but grounded in one's experiences)

IV. **SOCIAL CLASS AND BACKGROUND**

A. Social class (Term used to gauge one's economic and to a lesser extent, cultural status)
   a. Background (a person's class status as determined by their parents jobs, and their living own situation growing up)
   b. Now (a person's class status as determined by their job, education, and living situation)

B. Respondent background characteristics: Detached (Aspects of detachment from ones family background, and primary groups and institutions such as peers, family, and religion)
   a. Mother/father (weak or problematic relationship with one's family)
   b. Religion (inexistent or weak connection to a religious ideology)

C. Respondent background characteristics: Connected (Aspects of connection to primary groups and institutions such as peers, family, and religion)
   a. Mother/father (Strong or reasonable connection to one's family)
   b. Religion (Strong or reasonably strong connection to a religious ideology)

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